

The Condor. (Vol. xiv. Nos. 5, 6, 1912.)

The Emu. (Vol. xii. pt. 2, 1912.)

Messenger Ornithologique. (Moscow) (Nos. 3, 4, 1912.)

The Scottish Naturalist. (Nos. 11-13, 1912.)

Zoological Society Bulletin, New York. (November 1912.)

Zoologischer Anzeiger. (Bd. xl. Nr. 10-13; xli. Nr. 1-4, 1912.)

X.—Letters, Extracts, and Notes.

We have received the following letters addressed "to the Editor":—

SIR,—Mr. W. P. Lowe's most interesting account of the Gannets (*Sula capensis* Licht.) on Ichabo Island ('Ibis,' 1912, p. 263), has induced me to make some further enquiries, and I learn from Mr. Müller, H.B.M. Consul, that they are as numerous as ever, covering the whole island.

He writes, under date of October 2nd :—

"The men's quarters have had to be fenced off to keep the birds away, and they had to expedite the loading of the last lot of guano collected, as the birds returning to nest began laying upon the stacks. Various attempts have been made to estimate the numbers of the Malagas. . . ."

It seems possible that there are more Gannets on Ichabo than on the celebrated Bird Island in Algoa Bay.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Keswick Hall,
Norwich.

SIR,—In the October number of 'The Ibis' I had occasion to figure the male and female of the Blue Chaffinch of Gran Canaria (*Fringilla teydea polatzeki*). May I be permitted to point out the discrepancies between the original painting and the reproductions (Plate xii.), which are so marked as to take away to a large degree from the value of the plate. In fairness to the artist—H. Grönvold—I should like to

draw attention to the fact that the original painting was an *exact* representation of the species in question : much trouble was taken to get the colour identical with that of the living bird, and the completed plate was correct in the smallest detail. The reproduction of this plate in 'The Ibis' is so much darker than in the original painting, that it might almost portray a different species. This is especially apparent in the figuring of the male, for it takes away two of the characters of this subspecies which I wished to bring out, *e. g.*, the ashy olive-grey back, and the pronounced narrow black frontal band.

Another point of some importance which has been overlooked is the narrow white upper and lower eyelid, constituting an almost complete ophthalmic ring.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

The Orchard, Kings Langley,
October 23rd, 1912.

DAVID A. BANNERMAN.

The Report of the British Museum for 1911.—In obedience to an Order of the House of Commons, dated February 22nd, 1912, the usual annual report on the British Museum and its work in the year 1911 was issued last year, but not quite in time to allow it to be noticed in our October number. The report is full of interest, as is always the case, to workers in science of every department, but there is still room for some advantageous alterations. For instance, a list of the scientific staff and the functions which they fill would be of much interest, as would also be a list of the trustees of this important institution.

The following works in connection with the collection of birds have been executed during the year 1911 :—

The remounting of the series of birds in the general gallery has been continued, and the old and faded specimens of the Families Dendrocolaptidæ, Cotingidæ, and Pipridæ have been replaced by finely mounted examples.

The rearrangement and relabelling of the Gould collection of Humming-Birds has been continued.

The preparation of the fifth volume of the "Catalogue of the Collection of Birds' Eggs," by Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, has been completed, and will be issued shortly.

Lists of birds believed to require protection in certain British Colonies and Protectorates have been prepared for the information of the Colonial Office.

The collection of skins in cabinets has been carefully examined, drawer by drawer, or box by box, to ascertain if there is any trace of moth or beetle among them. About half the cabinets have been inspected in this way, and camphor has been placed in each drawer.

Great assistance has been received from Mr. David A. Bannerman, who has been engaged in working out various collections, in labelling a number of old collections, and in preparing them for incorporation.

The Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to inquire into the question of the destruction of plumage birds—including Mr. C. E. Fagan, Dr. Harmer, and Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, to represent the Museum—have completed their investigations, but have not yet issued their report.

Amongst the publications of the Museum relating to birds was the General Index to the late Dr. Sharpe's 'Handlist of the Genera and Species of Birds,' which will be of very great use to working naturalists. The first volume of this work was published in 1899, and the fifth in 1909. The General Index, containing 199 pages, was issued in 1912, and completed the work. Mr. Ogilvie-Grant (the Editor) tells us in his preface that his chief attendant, Mr. Thomas Wells, was of great assistance to him in this laborious task.

Among the more important collections presented to the Natural History Museum in 1911 were:—(1) The specimens obtained by the British Ornithologists' Union's Expedition to New Guinea. The large series of birdskins is of great zoological importance, and form a gift, the value of which can scarcely be over estimated. (2) The magnificent collection of African Birds formed by the late Mr. Boyd Alexander, during his various expeditions, and given in

accordance with his wish to the Trustees, has been handed over by his executors. It includes the types of 84 species described by him, and numbers in all 4798 specimens. (3) From Captain E. C. Hardy, R.N., has been received a valuable collection of Birds made by Mr. Willoughby P. Lowe, who accompanied H.M.S. 'Mutine' as naturalist. Captain Hardy was engaged in carrying out a magnetic survey from the Cape of Good Hope to Sierra Leone, and invited Mr. Lowe to join him as his guest for the purpose of collecting specimens for the Natural History Museum. (4) Mr. G. Blaine has contributed a valuable collection of birds formed during his travels in Equatorial Africa. (5) A large series of Grouse, Black Game, and Ptarmigan, including many interesting phases of plumage and valuable varieties, has been presented by the Grouse Disease Inquiry Committee.

The total number of acquisitions in the class of birds (including the five special donations just mentioned) was 10,819. Of these the most noteworthy were as follows:—

(1) Two hundred and seventy-six birds from Ireland; presented by Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant. (2) Five examples of the Irish Jay, *Garrulus hibernicus*, from Co. Waterford, new to the collection, presented by Count de la Poer. (3) Two Lammergeiers and a Turkey Vulture, presented by the Zoological Society of London. (4) Two nestling Marsh Harriers from the Camargue, presented by Mr. Collingwood Ingram. (5) Six specimens of species of *Paradoxornis* from China, presented by Commander H. Lynes. (6) Twenty-two birds from Sze-chwau, Western China, presented by His Grace the Duke of Bedford. (7) Two hundred and forty-four birds from Central Asia, collected by Mr. Douglas Carruthers. (8) Thirty-seven birds from Formosa, collected by Dr. A. Moltrecht. (9) Three hundred and thirty-seven birds from the Island of Palawan, collected by Mr. Willoughby P. Lowe. (10) The type specimens of *Tarsiger elgonensis* and *Irrisor granti*, from British East Africa, both new to the collection, presented by Mr. F. J. Jackson, C.B., C.M.G. (11) Nine birds from Equatorial Africa, six species being new to the collection, received in

exchange from the Berlin Museum. (12) One hundred and seventy-three birds from East Africa, collected by Mr. Robin Kemp. (13) One hundred and forty-one birds from Central Africa, presented by Mr. Sheffield A. Neave. (14) Fifty-three birds from Entebbe, Uganda, presented by Mr. C. C. Gowdey. (15) An example of the rare Scops Owl (*Gymnoscopus insularis*), from the Seychelles, presented by Mr. H. P. Thomasset. (16) Four specimens of the Black Bustard, *Lissotis afra*, from Bechuanaland, presented by Mr. R. E. Dent. (17) Three hundred and six eggs from northern Ankole, collected by Dr. R. A. I. van Someren. (18) Twenty-three birds from the district south of Lake George, including the type of *Laniarius mufumbiri*, presented by Mrs. M. Roby. (19) A nestling Ostrich, presented by Herr Carl Hagenbeck. (20) Sixteen birds, including the type of *Himantornis whitesidei*, and one egg from the Congo Region, collected by the Rev. H. M. Whiteside. (21) Nine birds from Cameroon, including six types of newly-described species, and seventy-two eggs (nearly all of which were not previously represented in the collection), presented by Mr. G. L. Bates. (22) Five hundred and thirty birds and one hundred and eleven skeletons from Cameroon, collected by Mr. G. L. Bates. (23) The type specimen of Wells's Wagtail, *Motacilla wellsi*, from Upper Nigeria, presented by Mr. T. V. Fox. (24) An example of Mantou's Bird-of-Paradise, *Heteroptilorhis mantoui*, new to the collection. (25) An egg of the Greater Bird-of-Paradise, *Paradisea apoda*, presented by Mrs. E. J. Johnstone. (26) An example of the extinct Passenger Pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*, from Kingston, Canada, presented by Mrs. Oliver. (27) Two hundred and twenty-four birds, sixty-eight eggs, and fifteen nests from Tamuco, southern Chile, including examples of a new species, *Upucerthia tamucoensis*, and eggs which were previously unrepresented, collected by Señor A. Soldaña. (28) Thirty-four birds from Entrerios, presented by Lady Jackson. (29) One hundred and twenty birds from British Guiana, presented by the Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich.

Rearrangement of the Collection of Birdskins in the Natural History Museum.—For a period of about six weeks, from the 15th of August to the 27th of September last, the Bird room was closed to visitors for the purpose of rearranging the birdskins in the cabinets to make room for the many additions which have accumulated during recent years, but which have not been able to be incorporated owing to the crowded state of the cabinets.

The number of incorporated specimens to be dealt with, amounting to 700,000 skins and formerly occupying 320 cabinets, have been spread over the 379 cabinets now available. The extra cabinets utilised include forty-four of the old type, placed in the passage connecting the two Bird-rooms, and eleven smaller top cabinets of a new type, specially designed to accommodate the larger birds of prey and Vultures.

In order to bring this about every drawer, except those containing the Ducks, which had been already rearranged, had to be shifted, and the labour of doing this has been very considerable. The result, however, is eminently satisfactory, and now for the first time for years there is ample room, not only for the present vast collection, but for any specimens likely to be added for many years to come.

In January 1910 it was found that a large number of collections, amounting altogether to about 70,000 specimens, were unnamed. Since that date nearly all of these have been registered, named, and labelled, and, so far as possible, reports concerning them have been published. The birds contained in these collections are now being gradually incorporated in their proper places, and are available for examination by students.

When this is completed, the entire bird collection, numbering nearly 800,000 specimens, will be in good order, and with the aid of a new catalogue, which has been prepared and marked so as to show the exact position of each species, it will be possible to find any specimen required without loss of time.

Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves.—It will interest Members of the Union to hear that a new Society has recently been formed to encourage the preservation of wild and primitive tracts of the British Islands in their present condition as a refuge for our indigenous fauna and flora.

Although elsewhere—in the United States, in New Zealand, and in various parts of Africa—much has been done by the State, in the United Kingdom it has been left to private enterprise and private munificence to establish and finance such refuges and nature-reserves as we at present possess. Something has been attempted, it is true, to check the wanton destruction of animal life by various Acts of Parliament, and we possess in “The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty” (25 Victoria Street, Westminster) a body who have already done much in this direction, although their main efforts have been directed to preserve ancient buildings and areas which are more interesting for their scenery. But they have recently secured to the public a tract of land on the coast of Norfolk, known as Blakeney Point, comprising 1000 acres, the resort and resting-place of large numbers of our migrants, and also a portion of Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire, one of the few regions of undrained fen-land left in England.

The new Society, which will co-operate with the National Trust, and which is to be called the “Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves,” has been founded with the following objects:—

1. To collect and collate information as to areas of land in the United Kingdom which retain their primitive conditions and contain rare and local species liable to extinction owing to building, drainage, and disafforestation, or in consequence of the cupidity of collectors. All such information to be treated as strictly confidential.

2. To prepare a scheme showing which areas should be secured.

3. To obtain these areas and hand them over to the National Trust under such conditions as may be necessary.

4. To preserve for posterity as a national possession some part at least of our native land, its fauna, flora, and geological features.

5. To encourage the love of Nature, and to educate public opinion to a better knowledge of the value of Nature study.

The Society exacts no subscription: members are formally elected by invitation of the Executive Committee (marked with * below), and all interested are invited to communicate with the Secretaries. The control of the Society's affairs is in the hands of a representative council consisting at present of the following:—

President, the Right Hon. J. W. Lowther, M.P., Dr. I. Bayley Balfour, F.R.S., Sir E. H. Busk, Francis Darwin, F.R.S., Dr. F. D. Drewitt, *G. Cluridge Druce, Professor J. Bretland Farmer, F.R.S., E. Fletcher F.R.S., the Right Hon. Sir Edward Grey, Bt., K.G., M.P., the Right Hon. L. V. Harcourt, M.P., *Sir Robert Hunter, K.C.B., Lord Lucas, *E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, *the Hon. E. S. Montagu, M.P., the Earl of Plymouth, C.B., Professor E. B. Poulton, F.R.S., Sir David Prain, F.R.S., *the Hon. N. C. Rothschild, *W. H. St. Quintin, Dr. R. F. Scharff, W. M. Webb. *Ex-officio*: Hon. Treasurer, *C. E. Fagan, I.S.O.; Hon. Secretaries, *W. R. Ogilvie-Grant and the Hon. F. R. Henley.

The Trustees of the British Museum have kindly given permission to the Committee to use the Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, S.W., as the temporary address of the Society.

The B.O.U. New Guinea Expedition.—Members will be glad to hear that Mr. Wollaston and his party reached the coast of Dutch New Guinea about September 18th last, and had formed a base-camp on the Oetakwa River as far up as the water was navigable for the launch. Mr. Kloss, of the Perak Museum, who had joined him with a large party of Dyaks, reported that after one week of strenuous work almost the whole of the stores had been transported from the river to the base-camp, and that he hoped very shortly to start collecting at 3000 feet. (See 'Ibis,' 1912, p. 555.)